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## Girls at the Skate Rink

Jennifer Carol Key

*University of Mississippi*

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GIRLS AT THE SKATE RINK

THESIS

A Thesis  
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements  
for the degree of Master of Fine Arts  
in the Department of English  
The University of Mississippi

by

JENNIFER KEY

May 2019



## ABSTRACT

A collection of original creative writing.

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## Blue Ridge

On the porch my father lies flushed  
and dreaming back to boyhood  
or war, when soldiers crushed heroin

with their hands and smoked it.  
He refused, but now wears a patch  
more potent than opium behind one ear.

Beyond the porch screens, bug-picked  
and spider-laced, the hills of Virginia  
march into a future we can't see,

just as birdsong insists on daylight  
long after it's gone. The lilies father planted  
to flower the season of my wedding

open their awful mouths—  
the first just yesterday and by today  
two turned trumpet. There is no silencing

their dreadful fanfare. Why must they persist  
when each pink tongue only says the same thing?  
The more that open the sooner he'll be gone.

## Ghost Psalm

No longer will I find you  
as blown ash and bone  
in flattened grasses where deer bed down

but in the sun flare and flash that move  
through this world as dapples  
on the backs of those we number in the field.

Their bodies steam in the pre-dawn damp,  
and when they rise they wear you in the mud  
thatched to the v of their hooves

and in the wet slicked to their fetlocks' curl.  
On the slenderest of legs, they carry you  
past what blurs into bramble and branch.

Once you were the field and everything in it  
that grew while the sky, pearlescent  
in its making and unmaking, slid over.

Now you, who have already traveled  
from one world to the next, must travel again  
across lowlands on the paws of the dog, on

the hooves of the deer, docents of dirt  
each divot recalls. They carry you  
into the reeds at the water's edge,

silver tongue lapping the bank where they stand.  
They carry you beyond my cries.  
Clover fed, the deer walk through summer,

then winnowed by want, long miles,  
they walk from one year into two.  
You will never come back

though my blood sings your name,  
and the heart, ghost of a continent,  
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I will stand in the field clothed in silence.  
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when not even the rain can find you?

## **Blue Ridge**

On the porch my father lies flushed  
and dreaming back to boyhood  
or war, when soldiers crushed heroin

with their hands and smoked it.  
He refused, but now wears a patch  
more potent than opium behind one ear.

Beyond the porch screens, bug-picked  
and spider-laced, the hills of Virginia  
march into a future we can't see,

just as birdsong insists on daylight  
long after it's gone. The lilies father planted  
to flower the season of my wedding

open their awful mouths—  
the first just yesterday and by today  
two turned trumpet. There is no silencing

their dreadful fanfare. Why must they persist  
when each pink tongue only says the same thing?  
The more that open the sooner he'll be gone.



## **Ghost Psalm**

No longer will I find you  
as blown ash and bone  
in flattened grasses where deer bed down

but in the sun flare and flash that move  
through this world as dapples  
on the backs of those we number in the field.

Their bodies steam in the pre-dawn damp,  
and when they rise they wear you in the mud  
thatched to the v of their hooves

and in the wet slicked to their fetlocks' curl.  
On the slenderest of legs, they carry you  
past what blurs into bramble and branch.

Once you were the field and everything in it  
that grew while the sky, pearlescent  
in its making and unmaking, slid over.

Now you, who have already traveled  
from one world to the next, must travel again  
across lowlands on the paws of the dog, on

the hooves of the deer, docents of dirt  
each divot recalls. They carry you  
into the reeds at the water's edge,

silver tongue lapping the bank where they stand.  
They carry you beyond my cries.  
Clover fed, the deer walk through summer,

then winnowed by want, long miles,  
they walk from one year into two.  
You will never come back

though my blood sings your name,  
and the heart, ghost of a continent,  
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## VITA

Jennifer Key is the author of *The Old Dominion*. Her writing has appeared in *The Antioch Review*, *Shenandoah*, *Callaloo*, and *Prairie Schooner*. She graduated with a Bachelor of Arts in English Literature from the University of Virginia.